



FAMILY MATTERS

Why Labour is the party of the family

Edited by Liz Kendall MP

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The importance of family



Liz Kendall MP

Who we are and what we become starts in our family home. Each chapter of our life story is co-authored with our parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, partners and children. Labour has always been the party of the family, not because we want to hark back to some judgemental or nostalgic view of family life, but because we know families help to define who we are as individuals and as a society. They are crucial to creating opportunities, improving life chances and providing wider emotional, social and financial support.

Unlike the Tories, Labour understands that the role of government is not to tell families what form they should take or how they should live their lives, but to support them by backing their aspirations and helping them to get on in life.

We know that families are facing huge pressure under this Government. Many are struggling to make ends meet because of low pay, rising prices and cuts to vital local services.

Longer term changes in society are also affecting family life. Fathers are increasingly taking on childcare responsibilities alongside mothers. Our ageing population means that more families are caring for elderly and disabled relatives: three in five of us will do this at some point in our lives. Working patterns are also changing with higher levels of self-employment, an increase in insecure contracts and a rise in the number of people working more hours,

and later on into their lives.

Labour has always succeeded when we match an understanding of how the world is changing with a long-term vision to improve people's lives. In the run-up to the general election, we have a huge opportunity to show families that Labour is on their side, supporting them through the difficult times now and backing them to meet the challenges of the future.

That's why I'm delighted to have been given the opportunity to edit this collection of articles on this hugely important topic. The articles you'll read will address the changes and challenges of modern family life. They set out Labour's positive vision for the future: how we will help families cope with, and harness, the changes that are happening backed up by practical, credible policies that will make a real difference to their lives.

Shadow children and families minister Alison McGovern MP and shadow minister for civil society Lisa Nandy MP explain how Labour's plans to improve childcare will help both mothers and fathers balance their work and family responsibilities. Steve Reed MP argues that we need to find new ways to involve and engage with teenagers about the services they use and the decisions that affect their lives.

Nancy Platts, our PPC for Brighton Kemptown explains how local public services like GP surgeries and Sure Start Children's Centres are vital

to the health and wellbeing of families, but are under increasing threat from this Government. John Hannett, General Secretary of USDAW, draws our attention to the difficulties faced by many shop workers and how Labour can better support working families.

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It's activists like you that are the strength of our movement. You'll be taking our message out to the country: that Labour is the only party that will deliver on the aspirations of families

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Fiona Mactaggart MP draws on the work of Labour's Commission on Older Women to highlight how many older women feel “sandwiched” between caring for elderly relatives and helping to look after their grandchildren, whilst often trying to hold down a job

at the same time. And Barbara Keeley MP calls for more to be done to support families who care for elderly and disabled relatives – a huge issue as our population ages.

I'd like to thank all of the authors for contributing their powerful pieces. But I'm equally excited about what you've got to say and I look forward to hearing your comments. After all, it's activists like you that are the strength of our movement. You'll be taking our message out to the country: that Labour is the only party that will deliver on the aspirations of families.

I hope that you enjoy the articles and that you will be inspired to tell your own family about Labour's offer to them.

Liz Kendall is Shadow Minister for Care and Older People



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■ We've been radicals on childcare before – and we'll need to be again



Alison McGovern MP



Lisa Nandy MP

Britain's economy isn't working for the people it should be working for and the human cost is all too evident. Wages are stuck, costs are rising and many people who want full-time work can't get it. Families caught in this living cost trap are increasingly fed up, wondering when things are going to get just a little bit better. For many parents, and also for those who might like to be parents one day, it's a gloomier picture still. The last few years have seen the costs of childcare sky-rocket, even as incomes have stood still and behind these figures are families who have to work several jobs to make ends meet, costing them precious time with their children at the most important time in their life.

The figures are alarming: according to the Office of National Statistics, the cost of placing a two to four year old in nursery has risen by 31% since 2010. For under-twos, costs are up by 27%. And in the areas that have seen the least benefit from this anaemic, lop-sided recovery, the costs have risen most. Families across the north west are paying 46% more, and their counterparts in the north east have seen childcare costs rise by 47%. These aren't just percentages – it's real, hard cash. Our constituents in the Wirral and Wigan with 2-4 year olds are

having to find on average £31 more per week if they want to pay for 25 hours of childcare. A huge ask when for the past six years, many people's wages have barely risen. Let's put this in the starkest possible terms: if two parents are working part-time in jobs paying around the average wage, it will be Thursday of each week before their pay has covered their childcare costs and they can move on to paying for the other household bills.

Parents – both mothers and fathers – who find themselves in these situations are going to find it hard to justify returning to work finan-

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Our failure to take childcare costs seriously leaves us all the poorer

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cially, or if they do, will find little left in their pay packets. That cuts their incomes, it increases the risk of child poverty, it can exacerbate the gender pay gap and on a national level it raises welfare bills and cuts tax incomes. It deprives people of the chance to spend time with their children and to take part in their communities. At a time when we face huge challenges – loneliness and isolation, an ageing

population and growing unemployment, we desperately need to draw on the talents and energy of everyone in Britain. Our failure to take childcare costs seriously leaves us all the poorer. And on this government's watch, the problem has grown.

Labour in government has a record to be proud of on childcare. We introduced an entitlement to 12.5 hours of free childcare for all 3-4 year olds, launched SureStart, funded after-school clubs as part of a major expansion of wrap-around care. In 1997 childcare was seen as a women's issue. We put it at the centre of the political agenda where it belongs. We were radicals then – and it is clear we need to be radical again. Sticking plaster solutions, such as this government is peddling, simply aren't going to address the scale of the problem.

So that's why one of the top priorities for Labour in government will be to introduce an entitlement to 25 hours of free, high-quality childcare for every three or four year old in a household where both parents work, or where the parent in a single parent household works. That's 440,000 chil-

dren benefiting every year, receiving childcare worth around £1,500. And we will pay for this by expanding the levy on the banks, who have got away with paying so little under this government, despite the continuing litany of scandals, failures and fines from the sector.

Moving to twenty-five hours free childcare could be transformative for so many families. The debate must not be reduced to simply whether fathers and mothers should be 'stay-at-home' parents or return to work – that is for every individual parent to choose. But what is clear at the moment is that too few families have any choice at all. We can ensure that every parent has the freedom to make that judgement based on their own family, in an economy where choosing work isn't financially unworkable because of childcare costs.

Alison McGovern is the Labour MP for Wirral South and Shadow Minister for Children and Families. Lisa Nandy is the Labour MP for Wigan and Shadow Minister for Civil Society



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Our teenagers need a government to offer them hope



Steve Reed MP

Being young in this country is tough right now and this Government is making it harder. Parents want a country that gives their children the chance to make their way in the world. But the odds are now stacked against young people to get the things that give life value and the chances to make more of themselves. Removing EMA, undermining vocational education and trebling tuition fees have put barriers in their paths and denied young people the access to learning and skills that help shape happier and more rounded lives.

It doesn't end there: young people can no longer claim housing benefit, youth unemployment remains unacceptably high, home ownership – or even renting – has become so unaffordable many young people can't imagine ever living independently. The chances to get on in life that were afforded to my generation have been denied to the next.

For our country to recover its confidence our next generation must have the means to play their part. Right now they risk being abandoned. The ONS reports that one in ten UK children has a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and the UK's young people are ranked amongst the unhappiest in the world by the UN.

These devastating statistics on

wellbeing are made worse by pressure on youngsters to own the latest consumer accessory and have the right body shape which has led to a sharp increase in self-harm, bulimia and steroid abuse. We cannot allow an aggressive consumer culture to consume our children's futures. Too many young people are becoming more insular and sedentary, sitting alone in front of a TV, games console or computer screen where the dangers of the unsupervised virtual world are far greater than they might face outside in the real world. Economic impacts on family incomes can lead to parents spending less time with children while fear of crime can lead to fear of children socialising outside the home.

Young people tell us they want more time with their family, more time with friends, more time outdoors. They hope for a successful future with a good job and a family of their own, but public policy is driving us in the opposite direction. The young face their future with fear rather than the hope that should be theirs.

How can a Labour government make a difference?

Relationships matter. We need to nurture them. The Tories have become the party of family breakdown by pushing parents to breaking point

through working longer hours for less pay. Labour must speak for the family. A senior minister, accountable to teenagers through the Youth Parliament, could take responsibility for reviewing all policy right across government for its impact on children and family life.

While we need to focus on work and the economy we cannot do so at the expense of our children and the family in all its modern forms. Parents need more rights to flexible working so they can spend more time with their children, more affordable childcare, and end to the Tory zero-hours culture that means families no longer have the certainty of a secure income.

Young people themselves need better support for critical decisions that will affect their future lives. For that reason we need to reintroduce universally high quality careers guidance to help young people choose subjects most likely to lead to a job and a fulfilling life, and we need to place greater value on vocational courses that lead to high quality jobs alongside the more traditional academic subjects.

Education is immensely important but teenagers spend 80% of their time outside school and we need to help them make the most of that time too. While I was leading Lambeth Council we set up an innovative youth services trust, the Young Lambeth Cooperative. With an annual budget



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of £3m it is owned and run by the community and gives young people a direct say over the kind of services, activities and support they want individually tailored for their neighbourhood. Crucially, half of its board is made up of young people themselves. Instead of forcing young people to fit into politics on our terms, handing them more power means they can explore new ideas that have meaning for them. The internet is an important way for young people to network with each other. We need to harness their interest to increase young people's participation in decision-making on their own terms.

The period of transition from childhood to adulthood, of moving towards the independence of adulthood, is an exhilarating time. But in policy terms, teenagers are the forgotten generation. The people best equipped to understand the pressures on teenagers are young people themselves. Speak to them and they will tell you what support they need, but they lack the power to make it happen. Our task is to find new ways to involve teenagers in the decisions that affect them, help them to enjoy the excitement and adventure of growing up. We mustn't forget our teenagers need a government to offer them hope too.

Steve Reed is the Labour and Co-operative MP for Croydon North and is Shadow Home Office Minister

Cameron and Clegg don't understand how vital the NHS is to most people- but we do



Nancy Platts

We didn't believe David Cameron's promise in 2010 not to cut funding to the NHS. And nearly five years on under the Coalition, the damage caused by incoherent changes and cuts to the NHS is abundantly clear.

There's a crisis in A&E departments all over the country, there are fewer frontline staff, it's harder to get a GP appointment quickly and waiting times are increasing. And none of this is the fault of the NHS staff who, despite punitive pay freezes, are working harder than ever before. I'm consistently impressed by the nurses, midwives, doctors, support staff and others who make the NHS what it is.

The NHS is so much more than the sum of its parts and that's why reducing its importance to just numbers and spending is misguided. It's vital that we look at the experiences patients and their families receive and the triumphs of the NHS in the round. It's not a conveyor belt of care but something we'll all rely on at some point, often at those key life-changing moments we all remember.

It's time we revived the 'cradle to grave' ethos of the NHS founders and reaffirm the promise that the NHS will always be there whenever we need it.

The NHS is important to families and that starts with mum getting high quality antenatal care and developing a birth plan with their midwife. But maternity services too are severely squeezed to offer the choice of type or place of birth that mum wants. It speaks volumes that the Royal College of Midwives went out on strike for the first time in 2014.

SureStart Children's Centres were an unquestionable success for the last Labour government and something I campaigned for personally when I worked at Daycare Trust. They were highly effective at knitting together health and childcare services for families and brought together people from different backgrounds. Children's Centres were a key part Labour's strategy to tackle child poverty yet they have been subject to Cameron's budget scalpel. Once again, under this government it will be the poorest families that lose out.

Add the loss of SureStart centres to the abolition of NHS Direct and the difficulty many people have getting a GP appointment quickly and it's easy to understand why so many make A&E their first port of call when they're worried about a sick child. It's the only place to turn.

This could soon be a reality here

in Brighton Kemptown, where I am standing to be the Labour MP. We are losing a GP surgery and campaigning to have it replaced because 5,500 patients are now scrambling to find a new doctor, many of them parents. Just down the road is the local hospital where staff at A&E are over-stretched and severely under-resourced. And a worried parent could be forgiven for taking their sick child to A&E rather than waiting days for an appointment or trekking halfway across town with them to another GP, that's if they have managed to get registered at all. Currently around 4,500 patients are still struggling to find a doctor that will take them on.

The closure of one local GP surgery has exposed the failings of the Conservative-led government's health reforms. Between NHS England, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board there is confusion about who has what powers and who should take responsibility for a new GP service. It cannot be acceptable to have over 5,000 people chasing around the City of Brighton and Hove trying to register with a new GP before the end of February next year. No thought seems to have been given to the fact that each of the nearest GP practices here will have to take on another 350 patients which will increase waiting times for everyone. It highlights the lack of a leadership role within the Conservative's new NHS structures.

The problem is that the Tories know the price of everything and the value of nothing. If you cut services somewhere, the demand doesn't go away it just goes elsewhere. My con-

cern is that those who are most vulnerable or most in need might fall out of the healthcare system altogether.

That's why the NHS desperately needs a strategic and holistic approach that concentrates on the experiences of the people who use it. It's vital for all, but particularly true for families, that they know where to turn when they need the NHS. And I know that Andy Burnham shares my view because his proposals to bring mental health services under the full purview of the NHS reflect exactly what I mean.

It's right that the NHS is at the centre of our manifesto for 2015. I don't think it can take another 5 years of being battered and salami-sliced by the Tories who say they care but quite simply don't share our passion and understanding of its importance.

It's not going to be easy but we've pledged extra money, will speak up for NHS staff, as well as patients because we know the people who depend on the NHS because we are those people.

David Cameron and Nick Clegg don't understand how vital the NHS is to most people. We do. We built the NHS after 1945, we rebuilt it again between 1997 and 2010 and we'll do it again. Because the alternative, where profit comes before people, is unthinkable.

Nancy Platts is the prospective parliamentary candidate for Brighton Kemptown and Peacehaven

Making it easier to combine work and family



John Hannett

It has always been hard to juggle work with caring responsibilities, and the last Labour government did an excellent job of promoting flexible working. This was really helpful for parents and carers in full-time work who needed to reduce or adjust their set hours of work. The statutory right to request flexible working, introduced by Labour, helped thousands of working people towards a better balance of work and care.

However, post-recession, the problem for many Usdaw members – and millions of other workers in the service sector – is not too little flexibility, but too much. And the flexibility is required on the part of the employee, not the employer.

With companies having to squeeze margins ever tighter in a highly competitive sector, retailers strive to match their staff hours as closely as possible to ‘footfall’ in stores – when they have customers.

The problem is that customers are tricky people – most of us don’t shop at the same time each week, and shopping habits are changing as customers seek out the best value, increasing the number of shopping trips, and visiting a higher number of different stores.

One pattern is that those of us who work ‘normal’ weekday hours want to be able to shop in the evenings or at weekends. Shops are less busy during the daytime in the week,

so retailers need to schedule the working hours of their staff to cover the busy times at evenings and weekends, and to cut unnecessary shifts during the day.

On top of this, shopping patterns are affected by variations in weather, TV schedules, and local events, making it harder for managers to plan when they need more staff and when they need less. Managers are expected to keep staffing costs as low as possible, and they therefore need as much flexibility as possible from their staff.

These evolving business practices have contributed to the increase in part-time working, with staff often being asked to do additional shifts to cover busy times. Nationally, whilst around 1.3 million part-time workers want to work full-time, there are also a significant number of part-time workers wanting more hours, although not a full-time contract.

Usdaw recently surveyed over 2,000 of our members regarding their hours of work and found that over half regularly work additional hours above their contracted hours. This flexibility is particularly hard to manage for staff who are parents or who have caring responsibilities.

Often the extra shifts available are those which are hard to fill – early mornings, evenings and weekends. In another recent Usdaw survey, 68% of shopworkers said they were under pressure from their employer to work



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on Sundays. Sunday working is even harder for many parents and people with caring responsibilities, yet 74% of parents and carers were put under pressure to work on Sundays – an even higher proportion.

There is no doubt that the increase in part-time working has increased the costs of in-work support, in spite of this Government's huge cuts to tax credits. However, the government have not only failed to tackle even the worst practices of zero hours contracts, they have exacerbated the problem by removing the statutory element of the right to request flexible working for parents and carers, so they no longer have recourse if a request is refused.

Usdaw uses the right to request flexible working to enable staff with caring responsibilities to turn down the shifts that they cannot do due to their care commitments, but this important legal support has been removed.

We have been talking to Shadow Ministers about the problems, and are pleased that they are listening. The National Policy Forum agreed that Labour will support flexible working for parents, and will consider how best to support grandparents who need to fit the care of their grandchild-

dren around their working hours.

And as well as ensuring that workers on zero hours contracts are offered contracts for their normal working hours, the NPF agreed that Labour would review the impact of short hours contracts on insecurity of income, and take action if there is an increase their use.

Balancing work and care has got a lot harder in the last few years. At least parents and carers can see that a Labour government understands the problems they face and will support them.

John Hannett is the General Secretary of Usdaw

When we talk about work and family- we must not forget older women



Fiona Mactaggart MP

Stories of isolation of older people and a ‘couldn’t care’ attitude amongst the young make the headlines. But in my work with Labour’s Commission on Older Women I have heard a different story: of families relying more than ever on each other, and older women at the centre holding things together.

Over the last two years, the Commission on Older Women has listened to the views and opinions of many older women – we held events in their workplaces, organised meetings and took evidence from individuals, academics, charities and voluntary organisations. We heard that families are under pressure because of the economic downturn – experiencing low pay, spiralling prices and cuts to benefits and services. So families have pulled together to ‘square the circle’ and make their lives work.

And if both parents are at work, government cuts to childcare have left them struggling to cope. Older women told us how, in many cases it is grandma who steps in to help, picking up at the school gate and looking after the grandchildren in the holidays. But these same older women are also stepping up to look after their elderly parents as they age and need care, becoming a ‘sandwich generation’, caring for both younger and older generations at the same time.

Most older women do not resent these responsibilities. They want to be involved, but they also want recognition for what they do, they need good health and social services providing the core of care for elderly or disabled relatives, and support to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities without sacrificing their own lives and prosperity.

The workplace is changing: women whose mothers often left the workforce after having children now want and need to stay at work, to allow them to pay the bills today and save for their retirement – further off now due to the changes in the state retirement age. The Tories don’t tire of reminding me that more women are in work than ever, but the fact that more women over 50 are looking for work means that these increases in employment have not been mirrored by decreases in unemployment. In fact the only cohort in the population which, according to government figures, has experienced an increase in unemployment is women aged 50+.

And in work, these women get paid less. The average full-time salary for women over 50 is just over £15,000, four-fifths of the earnings of men of the same age. Most women of this age work part time and take home less than £10,000 a year. Tax

threshold changes, trumpeted by the coalition government as helping low paid workers, haven't affected the incomes of these women, and zero hours contracts, termed 'precarious work' by the TUC, are prevalent in sectors dominated by older women.

Balancing work and care is a problem and many older women find no easy solution, some reduce their working hours others give up work altogether to manage. And when caring comes to an end or becomes more predictable, they struggle to get back to work. The Work Programme doesn't help,

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Labour is committed to finding ways to allow people to work and care

it has found sustained employment for only just over 10 per cent of the women aged over 50 referred to it – lower than the level for men in the same age group and for all other groups.

Labour is committed to finding ways to allow people to work and care. Carers need flexible work, access to caring leave and opportunities to take time out to adjust to changes in caring responsibilities and return to work when a sustainable way forward has been found.

The Commission on Older Women calls for a new politics which will enable older women to find balance in their lives. Their needs and aspira-



tions are not unique – good quality, fairly paid and secure work, an adequate pension on retirement, support for them as they work and care and an opportunity to contribute to public life without disappearing, as we found so many do from our TV screens as they age.

This can be delivered: older women will drive the process. Policy-makers need simply to identify the relatively modest

” adjustments which make their lives possible, eliminating the impossible choices that too many face.

Fiona Mactaggart is the Labour MP for Slough

Too many carers miss out on the support they need



Barbara Keeley MP

Surveys have shown that fewer than one in ten people can correctly state the true scale of this unpaid family care, meaning the extent of caring is often hidden. While most adults do not believe they will become carers in the future, Carers UK estimate that 60% of the population will have caring responsibilities at some point in their lives.

Unpaid family carers provide a vital part of the care needed by their family members but too many carers miss out on the support and advice that they need. Caring can often begin with a health crisis such as a stroke or a diagnosis of cancer. Starting caring following such a crisis can mean the person does not realise they have become a carer.

If carers are not identified by health professionals, they can struggle with their caring tasks. I have heard carers raise issues like having to buy a hospital bed to use at home and having no idea where to look. Others have talked about the continual cost of parking charges at hospitals when they accompany family members to hospital appointments or are visiting them in hospital.

Caring can be tough. Many people who are looking after family members put their own health second and they are not getting the help they need. The Care Act did give carers the right to an assessment of their needs, but this duty is on local authorities,

not on health bodies. Macmillan Cancer Care has reported that only 1 in 20 carers of people with cancer whom they asked had had a carer's assessment – and only 1 in 3 of the carers had even heard of a carer's assessment. Yet, 70% of those carers came into contact with health professionals.

Managing work alongside caring responsibilities can also take its toll. One in three carers has had to reduce their hours or give up work in order to continue caring. As cuts to local authority budgets have come into effect, carers can find that the respite breaks they need to enable them to continue caring are disappearing.

This Government has failed to address these issues for carers despite campaigns by me and other MPs, and by cancer charities like Macmillan.

Labour has already said that we will scrap the bedroom tax, which penalises carers with a room which is not additional but may be essential to their caring. In addition to this, we will continue to push for action on the other issues for carers. We must ensure that those who are contributing so much to their families and communities are given the support and advice that they deserve.

Labour believes in looking after the people who care.

Barbara Keeley is the Labour MP for Worsley and Eccles South

Labour is the real party of the family



Liz Kendall MP

All of these pieces send a clear message: Labour is the real party of the family. We understand that many families are struggling under this government. We know they want to support and care for one another, and to build a better life, but they need a government that will back their efforts and not pull the rug out from under their feet.

Each of the authors has shown how Labour will help families through the difficult times now, and back their hopes and aspirations for the future.

The challenge for us now is to get this message out, and Labour Party members are absolutely essential to making this happen.

I know from the conversations I have travelling around the country, and with my own family, that older people are as concerned about the impact of another Tory-led government on the next generation as they are about the impact on their lives and those of their friends.

Arthur Manger is one of those people. He is a former teacher and lifelong Labour activist in Leicester West. He helped lead a successful campaign to save a community centre, which is now run by local residents.

Arthur is worried about the number of young people he meets at the centre who are really struggling. He wants them to register to vote so that they can elect a Labour government that will offer them hope for a better future.

Arthur knows that politics matters and that we need to pass this message on to another generation.

The result of the next election will have a huge impact on young people's lives, yet the under 25s are the least likely age group in Britain to vote.

We can all make a big difference by making sure our families and friends are on the electoral register.

I'm asking if you will join this effort by getting just one person you know to register to vote – a daughter, son, niece, nephew or friend.

This isn't just about getting people to vote; it's about building bridges between generations. It's about having real conversations about what matters and what we all have in common.

Join me in telling our families and friends why taking part in the next election is so important. And, together, explain how Labour will change Britain for the better.

Liz Kendall is Shadow Minister for Care and Older People

